

P240  
Am 32  
no. 57

ORIGINAL  
NO. 57

## "NO DISCHARGE IN THIS WAR."

BY REV. W. R. WILLIAMS, D. D.

THERE is a great fortress and line of siege confronting every homestead, and commanding every group of our people—a line whose pointed musketry we are, perforce, sooner or later, all of us to face—and into the very mouth of whose death-dealing batteries, we are steadily marching. Sabbath by Sabbath—day by day—hour by hour—moment by moment, with each heaving of the lungs, and with each winking of the eyelash—the young, the old, the rich, the poor, the thoughtless and the gloomy, the ignorant and the scholarly, are walking up, in one inevitable procession, with the intermingled tramp of Manhood's heavy foot, and the patter of Childhood's footfall, into the flaming range of these terrible bastions. "THERE IS NO DISCHARGE IN THIS WAR." You fall here; I fall there. The rattling hail of death is among us at this moment. Sure as the daylight now shines, so sure is it we must all bide this summoning, and must brook this conflict. "IT IS APPOINTED UNTO MEN ONCE TO DIE"—appointed by an All-knowing One, whom we can not deceive—an Omnipresent One, whom there is no shunning—an Almighty One, whom there is no resisting. No skill, no craft, no force, no tears, no outcries, no affection, can baffle the stroke. No heaps of golden ore, no ranges of widest empire, can purchase exemption from

the confiscations of death. To-day, the capitalist stalks the Exchange, wielding his own large fortune, and it may be that of many another household than his own; to-day, the king rules his myriads of subjects, and all the cabinets and courts watch with solicitude the turns of his policy. The war of Death comes on; and by to-morrow the grim invader and destroyer has handed over the fortune of the millionaire to greedy heirs, and the keys of the bank to other office holders; and has tossed the diadem and sceptre of a dead Cæsar, perchance, into an infant's feeble and quivering hands. None pillages like Death, with such sweeping forfeitures; his victims "carry nothing away." None hunts like Death, never losing his scent or missing his game. None aims like Death, with a shaft that always strikes. Is there no flying—no bribing—no pleading—no reasoning—no treating with the enemy? No. "There is no discharge in this war."

If Death takes you away as you are, and without Christ, your soul is lost beyond a doubt. Will God let the destroyer hurry you away thus unprepared? Why not, if God's book explicitly warns you that "the wicked is driven away in his wickedness?" Why not, if He plainly says, "Neither shall wickedness deliver those that are given to it?" Why not borne away unprepared, if the fault, as to want of preparation, is all your own? You have been familiar with the gospel; you have lived in a land of Bibles and Sabbaths, and have had your personal warnings from Providence, and your own secret strivings of the Holy Ghost. When this great, dread war, to which you were born, and of which every cemetery, every tolling bell, every funeral notice, every passing hearse, every ache in your own person, and every ailment, warned you—this war, so long foreknown and

so terribly fatal—calls you, the reluctant and the truant, to take yourself the front place—what show of reason is there in your pleading want of preparation as a discharge? For what was life given, but to know God? And knowing God, as in Christ he most graciously revealed himself to be known by you, you would have been prepared. Why have you forborne to know your Saviour? why refused to acknowledge his gracious claims, and been ashamed to wear his blessed livery? He shrunk not from ignominy, or any pain or any loss, that he might reach and rescue you. Why have you withholden the heart that he asked? and why clung to the sins and the idols that he denounced? and why rejected the love, and peace, and the heaven that he proffered freely—proffered sincerely—proffered often—and is proffering you even now—but as yet has proffered you all in vain?

It is indeed a terrible lot, from a land of light and revivals, to go down, unprepared and unforgiven, to an eternal sorrow. The death of one dying without Christ is a fearful sight to behold; and the departure of such a spirit on quitting the body, is a journey that Fancy may well shudder to follow, and faint as she attempts to depict it. But how many have so died! And if Death comes for us thus found unready, we may tremble and recoil; but the terrible sacrifice, and the hopeless doom that are before us as we go, are to the grim, pale King of Terrors, no discharge.

"Not ready!" he may exclaim: "and after all this time—after twenty years, thirty years, fifty years, or even seventy years, not ready? When would you be? Come with me, then, as you are! If you have loitered, I, the messenger of a holy law and a just God, am no loiterer: here is my warrant, and it demands you, body and soul!"

The smoke of the torment of the willfully impenitent will go up day and night, by the purpose of a just and justly incensed Jehovah. But in this the day of opportunity and of repentance, there is proclaimed to us who yet survive, One mightier than either death or hell. It is the Prince of Life and the Lord of Glory. He came to destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil. But Jesus, the Captain of our salvation, in bringing rescue, must himself "taste of death"—must not only meet the common lot, but must bear upon himself the common and concentrated guilt of our race. Doing it, he tore from death its sting; and to them that believe, he is become the author of life everlasting.

To them that receive Christ, the war, though fierce, has lost its main terror, and is stripped of its perils. To him, mortality loses its ghastliness, and puts on already hopefulness and promise. The grave is like the wet and cold March day, of dark hue, and moist, chilly air; but behind all this gloom, and behind all this damp, lie the treasures of bursting spring, and the glories of refulgent summer. The light afflictions, that are but for a moment, work out for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. He is, in one sense, the Destroyer; but he is also the Restorer. He brings back, through Christ's victorious grace, the lost innocence and peace of Eden. Is he the Divider, sundering the nearest ties—the household bands? But he is also the Re-uniter, gathering the Christian to his dead who sleep in Jesus, and to "the general assembly of the first born." To those who believe in Christ, Death is the end of sin, the gate of paradise, and the beginning of a new, a better, and an unending life.